



City of Bloomington

Environmental Commission

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, May 16, 2013 7:00 pm
City Hall – McCloskey Room, 401 North Morton Street

Attending:

Mike Litwin, Linda Thompson (Staff), Dedaimia Whitney, Carrie Albright (Chair), Carissa Moncavage (Vice-Chair), Deborah Myerson, Dianne May, Diane Jung, and Kriste Lindberg, Jayne Piepenburg (SPEA Fellow), Steven Flowers (intern), Emily Kasnak (intern)

Absent:

Andy Williams, Chaim Julian, Sean Gorman

- I. Introductions (1 min) (Time mark 7:07 pm)
 - A. New intern Steven Flowers is introduced. Flowers is a graduate student at Indiana State University.
- II. Announcements (2 min) (Time mark 7:10 pm)
 - A. Next Environmental Commission meeting: Thursday, June 20th, 7:00 pm, McCloskey Room
 - B. Next Planning Committee meetings: May 29th, June 13th, 4:10 pm, Planning Dept.
 - C. Next Tree Commission meeting: June 19th, 9:30 am, Bryan Park
 - D. Next BCOS meeting: June 11th, 6:00 pm, McCloskey Room
 - E. Next Co. Environ. Quality & Sus. Com. meeting: June 12th, 5:30 pm, Rm 100 Showers North (2nd Wed of the month)
- III. Approval of March Minutes (3 min) (Time mark 7:08 pm)
 - A. Whitney moves to approve, Albright seconds. The motion passed unanimously.
- IV. Public Comment (1 min) (Time mark 7:10 pm)
- V. Committee reports and discussions (75 min) (Time mark 7:11 pm)
 - A. Planning Committee & St. Environmental Planner (15 min: Julian, May, Litwin, Thompson)
 - 1. Japanee Restaurant
 - i. Want to enclose their patio, making the building two stories tall by adding a second story to the front of the building. What they're asking for follows code, and on addition projects there isn't a lot that the EC can recommend, says Thompson.
 - 2. Kilroy's Sports Bar
 - i. Want to enclose patio area on the northwest side of their establishment; they're hoping that with this addition that they can open for lunch and Sunday brunch (currently they are open 3PM-3AM), so if the project is approved they would like to enhance their kitchen.

- ii. They are asking for 3 variances: one for height, as the building will not be as tall as required, another for roof pitch, as the roof they are proposing will be pitched rather than flat as required, and façade modulation.
 - a. The roof and walls of the building they are proposing would be made completely of sliding polycarbonate windows that will be like shingles that can retract into any configuration. Polycarbonate is recyclable and has a better insulation value than glass but also contains BPA.
- iii. Again because the project is remodel there isn't much for the EC to recommend.

3. Fox Apartments

- i. Want to build a 4-story brick apartment building with 21 one-bedroom units and three two-bedroom units. Parking will be in a garage on the first floor and will contain 13 parking spaces. They will have a gathering place on the roof of the building with room for small gardens.
- ii. They are asking for a void-to-solid variance for first floor windows.
- iii. The EC would like to recommend green building practices are used, recycling space is provided, that vegetation is used in the front of the building instead of grass, and will express support for the roof garden plan.
- iv. Whitney expresses concern that the lack of adequate parking will put pressure on the public commons. Thompson explains that ordinances have been changed to specify maximum parking spaces rather than minimum, and in this zoning district developers do not have to provide any parking. Whitney asks that the EC express this concern about parking pressures in the memo.

B. L4L/Natural Landscaping Committee (15 min: Jung, Lindberg)

1. Jung hasn't been able to attend many Farmer's Markets yet this season as a result of adverse weather and illness, but she expects that she will be at the market from now on, except for June 29th when she will be out of town.
 - i. Kasnak said she should be able to attend up to two Farmer's Markets per month.
 - ii. Jung feels that the table has a total abundance of valuable information, but has some new ideas for new brochures:
 - a. Another brochure on bees
 - b. Brochure on grasses, in line with the "Lawns for Life" mission
 - c. Possibly updating the Mason Bee Habitat brochure with information about maintaining the habitat each year and which materials can be used
 - iii. Jung still wants to do the giveaways and show-and-tells and that markets, as discussed at the previous meeting.
 - iv. Also bumper stickers are a possibility in the future.
2. Bug Fest is happening this year, Hilltop Garden and Nature Center, June 22, 10am-4pm.
 - i. Jung suggests that the EC table at this event, but can't be both at the Farmer's Market and this event, so hopes someone from the Commission will volunteer.
3. Jung also has the opportunity to write several articles:
 - i. One article for a green newsletter
 - ii. Another article for Bloomingfoods
4. A service learning project proposal involving creating an interactive simulation of decision making in the process of creating a garden is in the works, and Jung plans to tie this in to an Archer Foundation Grant to be submitted for a November deadline. The project may be a capstone project for informatics students.

5. Jung also thinks that there should be another neighborhood organization Farmer's Market this summer (at the same time as the City's market) and that the EC should table there as well.

6. Of the 50 new signs, close to half were given away at the Master Gardener Show.

C. BEQI Committee air discussion (5 min) (Albright, Moncavage, Piepenburg)

1. Piepenburg has finished and uploaded the revised air section online. Piepenburg says her correspondence with Whitney during the process brought up some interesting questions about the intended audience and purpose of the document, which Piepenburg hopes can be discussed earlier on in the BEQI process during the next round of updates.

2. Whitey brings up the overlap between the Sustainability Committee and the EC, and asks the committee whether there is room for cooperation. Albright suggests that both groups produce quality documents, and that the BEQI committee can keep in touch with them and offer to help out or collaborate. The Sustainability Committee is 8 years old and so far collaboration has been difficult to establish as the two groups work out which is their "territory." Thompson suggests that they are working a lot on food and energy.

D. Tree Commission and BCOS Report (5 min: Whitney)

1. Whitney attended the BCOS meeting, and reports that they heard from speaker and developer Matt Press, who is responsible for the Dunn Street project and is also building residential and retail space along the B-line trail. Whitney found the talk to be excellent, and mentioned that through her participation in the World Future Society she has learned that these kinds of urban renewal activities are happening in other cities (Denver, Chicago). She says that this is an area of interest that overlaps between the EC and BCOS as well.

2. The Tree Commission had a representative from Vectren come to request to cut down 25 City trees. According to the Vectren representative, there is no emergency, but that the removal of these trees is forward thinking, given the recent explosions. They want to remove trees directly above their gas lines in a manner similar to what they currently do for their above ground wires.

i. The Tree Commission is discussing a policy whereby with activities like this, trees will be required to be replaced at a rate of three trees per each tree removed. Vectren doesn't normally do this, but the decision hasn't been made yet.

ii. Thompson brings up the point that Vectren will go ahead and take out the trees that are on their easements, but that these 25 trees are not on their easement. The tree commission must decide whether to deny Vectren's safety concerns and disallow them from cutting down the trees, or whether they should hold Vectren to replacing the trees, maybe at a ratio higher than 1:1. This problem threatens virtually all City trees, as these gas lines run everywhere in the City, so what they do for these trees may set a precedent for the future, and the Tree Commission may need to write a full-fledged plan to handle these concerns.

a. Additionally, Thompson was unable to find a map of the high pressure lines online that the Vectren representative suggested was available.

3. The Tree Commission was also visited by the City Attorney as they had an issue with executive session. During a previous meeting they asked a member of the public to leave so that they could discuss the issue raised by that person, essentially holding an impromptu executive session, and this practice is not allowed. These sessions are open to the public and Commissions cannot ask members of the public to leave during these times.

i. This brings up a potentially interesting question for the EC: Do all decisions need to be made during the meetings in front of the public? Is there room for non-public discussion?

A. Imagine Bloomington Update (10 min, Litwin)

1. The GPP will focus on groups of three elements: currently culture, environment and human condition. The last meeting was almost entirely focused on culture. There is a meeting every week, and about 3 meetings per group.
 - i. Litwin said that at the May 8 meeting the committee discussed obstacles and constraints to increasing access to art downtown, and identified the biggest issue to be property values; due to rising property values, many artists can't afford studio space downtown anymore.
 - a. Perhaps there could be a UDO requirement to add art to new buildings?
 - ii. Architectural standards were also discussed.

VII. New Business (5 min)

(Time mark 8:23 pm)

A. Williams is resigning from the committee to take a new job in St. Louis.

B. Waste Reduction Committee projects (10 min: Albright, Moncavage, Williams)

- i. The Taste of Bloomington (June 22nd) last year had huge recycling areas, staffed with volunteers from BCOS, the hYPe group, and a Downtown Bloomington organization to help promote recycling.
 - a. The same recycling areas will be established this year, but there will be more smaller areas as well, all staffed by volunteers.
 - b. Albright estimates that at about 50 volunteers are needed.
 - i. Jung recommends that Albright contact Bet Sicitch and Emily Rex for help finding volunteers.
 - c. Albright suggested that each station could have a flag (like a bike flag) to help Taste of Bloomington attendees find trash/recycling areas.
 - i. They need to see how much these flags cost, and may source them from Discardia or borrow them from Lotus.
 - d. Myerson asks whether attendees could bring their own dishes/utensils to use, but Lindberg brings up health code issues, and Whitney mentions that the Taste of Bloomington will attract as many as 14,000 attendees, so this may not be practical.
 - i. Whitney suggests that reusable utensils could be handed out with tickets to the event.

C. EC guest speaker discussion (10 min: Albright)

1. Albright requests suggestions for speakers that the EC could invite every couple of months or so to speak to them about topics that the EC wants to become more knowledgeable about or perhaps to hear the "other side's" perspective on certain issues.
 - i. The Monroe County EC currently has someone come in for 10-15 minutes in every meeting, and their current focus is water.
 - ii. Some other ideas from the Monroe County include the effect of light pollution, the state of agriculture in Monroe County (Amy Thompson from Purdue Extension), public transit (Lou May), organic farming, and hearing from someone from BCOS/EC about what they do.
 - iii. May would like to hear about green infrastructure (Matt Press?).
 - iv. Whitney would like to hear from the Monroe County EC about what they do and what areas there are for collaboration.
 - a. Thompson mentions that she attended the previous Monroe County EC, and one of the issues they discussed was landfill gases. Perhaps landfill gases is another topic that the EC could learn about.
 - v. Whitney is also interested in water, what concerns there are for the future, what the problems are, and so on. Jung suggests that perhaps the EC could tour a water treatment facility? (Mike Hicks as a speaker?)
 - vi. Jung would like to hear from Rachel Atz about toxins.

- vii. Thompson recalls Kevin Tunesvick and his talk related to climate change and how to change your planting paradigm as temperatures increase.
- viii. Whitney mentions a man from the Forester's Conference who spoke about land trusts, in particular urban land trusts.
- ix. May mentions public transit, and Thompson suggests hearing from someone from Bloomington Transit.

D. Update EC Handbook discussion (5 min: Moncavage)

- 1. Moncavage would like to update the EC handbook in particular with regard to commissioner responsibility, and what is appropriate commissioner behavior in terms of having plans voted on and so on.
- 2. Thompson has recently had the paper copy converted to pdf and from pdf to Word so that it can be edited.
- 3. Moncavage says she will email the electronic copy to the commissioners before the next meeting so that commissioners can provide feedback on updates.

E. Committees for summer intern projects (10 min: Thompson)

- 1. Piepenburg will be continuing the work of former intern Jess Vogt and working on the developer commitments database.
 - i. Lindberg asks whether Piepenburg has communicated with utilities (Phil Pedene) as far water issues are concerned, for example with regard to detention basins and rain gardens, as certain petitions have specific conditions regarding these issues. Piepenburg will follow up on this issue.
 - ii. Whitney and May volunteer to be on Piepenburg's committee.
- 2. Flowers will be working on converting previous EC GHG inventories into a climate action plan for Bloomington.
 - i. Whitney volunteers to perform copy editing duties.
 - ii. Myerson and Albright volunteer to be on Flowers's committee.
 - iii. Thompson will contact Myerson and Albright with meeting details.

VIII. Commissioner Announcements (30 min)

(Time mark 9:04 pm)

- A. Lindberg and Kasnak talked about the Eco Heroes event. Kasnak says that there were 75-80 total entries, and more participants since many were group or partner projects. They raised \$975 in sponsorships as well as gifts, and about 80 people attended the event. Cookies, popcorn and juice were served and the Mayor came and did a great job speaking.
 - 1. One flaw identified by Kasnak was the lack of High School entries; she suggested that communicating with Monroe County Schools can be difficult, and perhaps advertising the event by other means outside the school system would be beneficial in the future.
 - 2. Jung says that she witnessed the Mayor glowing and raving about the Eco Heroes event.
- B. May brings up a really interesting New Yorker article regarding replacing Styrofoam with mushrooms that she thought commissioners would be interested in reading.
- C. Lindberg announces that through her job with the City's Parks and Recreation Department she is involved in starting an Adopt a Stream program modeled after the successful Adopt a Trail program, and that there will be a push for the Adopt a Stream program next month in order to have it together for the Fall.
 - 1. Pilot "service-learning" projects include Cascades Creek, with Heather Reynolds and IU Human Biology, and Clear Creek with IU Chemistry.
 - 2. Lindberg is also going out with some people from utilities to work on erosion control with the hopes of designing some training for inspectors regarding erosion. The erosion issues are important for State and Federal Reporting requirements.

3.Lindberg also announces the Green Spots tour is coming up in June. Jung says she would like her “Green Spot” home to be on the tour.

IX. Adjournment

(Time mark 9:16 pm)

A. Jung moves for the meeting to be adjourned. Whitney seconds. The motion passes unanimously.